

# The Gunmaker Of Moscow

By SYLVANUS COBB, Jr.

[CONTINUED.]

"Tomorrow night, my lord, will do as well, for I am engaged to-night."

"Very well; let it be tomorrow night. But, mind, this is settled. There is no more question about this affair. When I see you again, I trust you will have no reason to offer why Ruric Nevel has not been disposed of."

"You need have no fears on that head, my lord. You may consider that the gunmaker is dead."

"Right! So let it be."

And thus did the wicked duke dispose of Ruric Nevel.

Again Olga took a turn across the room, and when he stopped there was a dark cloud upon his brow.

"Savotano," he said, "there is one more man whom I at least would be assured is not in my way. I mean that infernal monk."

"I saw him this morning, my lord, and I am sure he is watching me. And he is not alone. He has others with him. I have been followed, and one of my men—the one who entrapped Nevel—told me not two hours ago that he knew his steps had been followed."

"And do you think this monk is at the bottom of it?" asked the duke, with some uneasiness.

"I know it, for I have seen him when I knew he was watching me."

"Then why have you not got him out of the way?"

"Aha!" uttered the priest, with a dubious shake of the head. "We cannot always do as we would. But he shall not live long, if I can help him off, and I think the opportunity may offer itself."

"He is a bold fellow. Why, I found him only yesterday in my own palace—in the chamber of the countess."

"Ha! And could you not have disposed of him then?"

"Not well. It was in broad day, and people were about. But if I catch him here again my sword shall find his heart. I have given him legal warning. But," continued the duke after some further thought, "you must be careful in your dealings with him. He may have some organized band always about him."

"I will be caught in no trap," returned the priest confidently. "He shall find that I can be as keen as he can. But it is very strange—"

"What is strange?" asked Olga, starting, for he, too, had been thinking of a very strange thing.

"Why, that this black monk should turn up here in Moscow so suddenly and commence, the first thing, to dog my footsteps and hang about your palace."

"Aye," responded Olga, "and the same thought was in my mind when you spoke. But never mind; he shall not escape me if he presumes much more. By heavens, they shall know that the Duke of Tula is not to be trifled with. There is but one power in Moscow above mine, and that is the emperor himself, and I may say that even he is not above me. He cannot get along without me. Does anything turn up to puzzle him, he sends straightway for me."

"Then use your power for your own good, my lord."

"I will. Fear not for me on that score."

At this juncture the priest arose to take his leave.

"You have your instructions," said Olga.

"I remember them well, my lord, and they shall be carried out to the letter."

"And when done let me know."

"I will obey."

And once more the misshapen priest was in the street and the duke was alone.

"Ah, my lord," muttered the pliant tool to himself as he walked thoughtfully along, "you may be a little too confident of your own power. I have known such things in Russia."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE MYSTIC TRIBUNAL.

Away back of the old Cathedral of Moscow and in a narrow, dark court which was overlooked by the towers of the giant edifice stood a curiously constructed stone building, which, though not connected bodily with the cathedral, yet seemed to belong to it. It was low and broad, with a flat, tiled roof and without a visible window. Within one of the apartments of this building—an apartment away down in the bowels of the earth, where the light of day never came—were seated six men. The room was of fair size, and the floor, the walls and the ceiling were of dark stone. Wooden benches were arranged about the

place, and there were some other articles of furniture there, too—strange contrivances they were and fashioned after various shapes and patterns. But of that anon. The place was lighted by a large hanging lamp which had just power enough to make the room gloomy and dismal. The six men sat about a table on which were a book and sword, and the most prominent man there was Vladimir, the monk.

And Vladimir alone exposed his face. All the rest wore black masks, their robes being of the same melancholy hue. They sat there silent as death, Vladimir gazing down upon the table and the other five gazing fixedly upon him. They were stout men, all of them, and they bore themselves toward Vladimir as bears a servant to his acknowledged master.

"The hour is waxing late," said Vladimir at length, looking up from the table. His voice sounded in that place like the echo of a tomb. It was low and hollow, and the others started as they heard it.

"There's time yet to spare, master," replied one who sat next the monk.

"I trust we shall not be disappointed," said Vladimir at the expiration of a few moments more.

To this no answer was returned. At length there came a dull echo from overhead, and the six dark sitters started up to listen. The sound grew louder, and soon it sent down into that dismal chamber the notes of coming footsteps. In a few moments more the heavy iron door creaked upon its hinges, and three men entered, and soon behind them came three more. Those who came in advance were two of them leading the third as a prisoner. And so it was with those behind. The iron door creaked again, and when the heavy bolts had been shoved into their sockets the two prisoners were led forward.

"Master," spoke one of the newcomers, "we have brought the prisoners—two of them—as you commanded."

"It is well," said Vladimir. "Let them be brought before us."

As the two men are brought to where the light can strike upon their faces we see the two guides who conducted Ruric Nevel to his place of confinement. One of them was he who met Ruric in the street, and the other is the one who guided him into the old bathhouse with the lantern in his hand. They shuddered fearfully as they gazed around upon the dismal scene, and their looks plainly showed that they knew not why they had been brought thither.

"Lesko Totma!" pronounced Vladimir.

The first of the prisoners—he who had met Ruric in the street—started as he heard that name and tried to speak.

"Are you the man?" asked the monk, looking into his face.

"Yes, holy father," the wretch tremblingly replied.

"Then stand you here in front of me."

The fellow was moved up in front of the table, and surprise and fear seemed to be struggling for the mastery over him, for he recognized now the strange monk about whom he had probably heard so much.

"Lesko Totma," said Vladimir low and slowly, "you have been seen much in the company of a hump-backed priest named Savotano. You know such a priest, do you not?"

The man hesitated. He gazed furtively about him and trembled more than before.

"Answer me!"

"Yes, sir; I know him."

"And now, sir, be sure that you answer me directly and truly. Do you know a young gunmaker named Ruric Nevel?"

The fellow started with a perceptible quake as this question was asked, but he seemed to have been prepared for it, for his answer was direct.

"No, sir; I do not."

"Ha! Beware! Think well before you speak."

"If you mean the man who fought the duel with the Count Damonoff, then I have heard of him, but I do not know that I ever saw him."

"Then you are sure of this?"

"Of course I am."

"Frederic Viska!"

The second prisoner now came forward. He was a few years younger than his companion, though somewhat larger and evidently more bold. Totma was conducted out of the apartment as Viska came forward.

"You, too, have been in the company of this priest, Savotano, have

you not?" the monk asked.

"I know him," the fellow replied, with a slight touch of defiance in his tone. He had not surely looked about him to see those strange contrivances by which he was surrounded, or he would not have ventured such a tone.

"And you have been some in his company?"

"Perhaps so."

"Very well. And, now, do you not also know Ruric Nevel?"

"I have seen him, too, sir."

"And now can you tell me where he is at this present time?"

"No," was the answer, short and quick.

"Beware! If you have any regard for your own welfare, you will answer me truly. Where is Ruric Nevel?"

"I tell you I know nothing about him—nothing at all."

"And of this you are sure?"

"Who are you that assume to question me thus? I know you not."

Viska spoke this in a tone of virtuous indignation, probably thinking that that turn might serve him.

"We will let you into the secret by and by," the monk returned, with a peculiar shake of the head.

"But I will ask you once more, do you know where Nevel is?"

"No!"

"You need not speak quite so loud. We hear easily."

"Then don't ask me impertinent questions," retorted the prisoner.

Vladimir started half way up, and his fists were clinched, but the quick flush passed from his face, and he sat back again.

"Look ye," he said as soon as he was sure his anger would not manifest itself, "were I not sure that you know what I ask I would not question you thus. And now, once more I ask you, will you give me some clew to the whereabouts of Ruric Nevel?"

"I'll answer you once more. I know nothing about him. You must not think that this dark place and you men all dressed in black can fright men into telling a lie as it might a child."

At this point Vladimir turned to one of his men, one of those who helped bring the prisoners in, and said:

"You know this to be the man?"

"Yes, my master."

"And you have seen him in private confab with the hump-backed priest?"

"I have."

"And the other things you told me are true?"

"They are, master."

"Then let down those interpreters."

At this command two of the attendants moved to the back side of the room, where they unhooked a stout chain from the wall, and as they allowed it to slide through their hands a curious piece of machinery descended directly in front of the table. It consisted of a stout bar of iron which was suspended midway upon the chain and there rested parallel with the ceiling. Upon each end of this bar were straps of iron armed with springs and screws. At a motion from the monk the prisoner was led back till he stood directly beneath the bar, and then his arms were seized and raised up. He struggled some and cursed more, but he was soon overcome. The iron bands were passed around his wrists, and connected with these were two small cups which were slipped over the thumbs. After these had been firmly secured the chain was tightened, and the fellow's hands were raised far above his head. There were two results produced by tightening the chain. It not only tended to draw the thumbs back upon the wrists, but it also twisted the thumb, the two cups being armed with filike teeth within and closing tightly upon the flesh.

"Now, sir," spoke Vladimir lowly and deeply, "I am going to ask these questions again, and you will do well to answer them truly. Will you tell me where Ruric Nevel is?"

"I don't know."

"Will you tell me where you saw him last?"

"I haven't seen him since he fought the duel with Damonoff."

"Beware!"

"I have not."

"Mark me. I have had you watched, and I know that you have seen Nevel within these three days. This I know, so I have no hesitation in the course I am about to pursue. Once more, where is Ruric Nevel?"

The man hesitated now, but his answer was still the same. He would not tell.

Vladimir made a motion to the two men who stood by the wall, and they gave a pull upon the chain.

"O God!" gasped the prisoner as the painful twist and wrench came upon his thumbs.

"Will you answer?"

"How can I? How can I?"

"By speaking what you know."

"I know nothing."

Another signal was made to the men at the chain, and they pulled again; another groan from the prisoner, but no other response.

Another signal and another pull. "Mercy!" shrieked the poor wretch, quivering with pain.

"Will you answer?"

"I don't know."

"Then we must try again."

"No, no; O God, no more!"

"But you must answer."

"I don't know."

"Then you must have forgotten, and such treacherous memories need starting up."

As Vladimir thus spoke he waved his hand again.

"O God, have mercy! Oh-o-o! Save me! Save me!"

"Save yourself."

The wretch was in torment now without ceasing. Nearly the whole of his weight bore upon his wrists and thumbs, and the latter were drawn over almost to the wrist. But he would not answer. He had a deeper fear than this. He feared to break the horrid oaths by which he was bound to the scheming priest.

One more pull upon the chain, and the man's feet were clear of the floor. His whole weight now bore upon his thumbs, and he groaned in the agony of torture. He bore it a few moments, but his coward soul could bear no more.

"O God! Down, down! Let me down!"

"But answer. Where is Ruric Nevel?"

"I—I—don't!"

"Hold, thou false hearted villain!" shouted Vladimir in a voice of thunder. "This is the last of this torture, but when we take you from here we can put you into a state compared with which the pain you now experience is real joy. Each particular limb shall be wrenched all out of shape, and your very eyes shall start out like!"

"Down, down! O great God, down!"

"Where is Ruric Nevel?"

"I'll tell you! I'll tell you if you spare me!"

"Tell me first!"

There was a moment more of hesitation, one single moment, and then the miserable wretch gave up.

"He's in the bathhouse."

"Ha! Where?"

"In the old bathhouse near the river on the Tula pass in one of the vaults!"

"Very well. Let him down."

The chain was slackened up, and Frederic Viska was once more upon his feet. He trembled yet, for there was pain in his arms.

"Now carry him out," ordered Vladimir, "and bring the other one in."

In a few moments more Lesko Totma was before the strange tribunal. He trembled fearfully, for he had been where he could hear his companion's groans without hearing what he said.

"Lesko Totma," spoke the monk in a low, deep tone, "we have given you time for thought, and mayhap you have your memory brightened by this time. Now, where is Ruric Nevel?"

"I don't know."

"Ah, you still forget, eh?"

"I never knew."

"A most strange forgetfulness, I must confess. Let the interpreters be adjusted!"

"Oh, mercy! Don't murder me!"

But no notice was taken of his cries. The straps and conical cups were adjusted and the chain drawn tight. At the first turn of the self acting screw the fellow shrieked. It was not so much with the present pain as with the fear of what was to come. The very presage of the place, so dark and dismal, had more effect upon his mind than it had upon his companion.

At a second pull of the chain he groaned and begged for mercy. He had heard of this dark place, and he fancied that men who came there seldom went away alive.

"Hark ye, base wretch," the monk said, "if you do not tell me where the young gunmaker is I'll have you torn limb from limb. Another pull, there!"

As the wrench came again the villain fairly shouted with pain.

"Oh, let me go! Let me go! I'll tell all!"

"Then tell. You leave not this place alive until you have told."

"He is—O God! He is—in the old bath!"

"Where?"

"The duke's bath, on the pass of Tula!"

"Whereabouts there?"

"In the lowest, farthest vault. Oh, spare!"

Vladimir waved his hand, and the quaking wretch was freed from his torture.

"Now conduct them both to the dungeons and lock them up. They must not run at large for the present. Let them be secure."

"No, no," cried Viska, who had been brought back. "You were to let me go if I told you."

"Not free, sir," said Vladimir.

"But you have no right to hold me thus. I am nearly dead with pain now where you have torn my hands in pieces. By the—"

"Silence, dog! My authority here is my power. My right is my might. I have you, and I will keep you. Were I to let you go I might not have the power to catch you again, as legal officers could. Lead them off, and then we'll turn our attention to the duke's bath!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## A SENATOR DISGRACED.

How Mr. Dietrich, of Nebraska, Dodged a Shameful Charge.

Omaha, Neb., Jan. 8.—The trial of Senator Charles H. Dietrich for alleged bribery, in connection with the appointment of a postmaster at Hastings, Neb., came to an abrupt end today, when the United States Circuit Court, Judge Vandeventer presiding, decided that Dietrich was not a Senator at the time the alleged acts occurred. The opinion was a lengthy one and is said to be a precedent. Upon this decision, District Attorney Summers entered a nolle in other cases against the Senator, with the statement that the construction placed on the law by the Court precluded further proceedings against Senator Dietrich or Postmaster Fisher, both of whom were discharged.

District Attorney Summers stated to the Court that the Government had not within his knowledge ever placed a man on trial on what might be termed a technical violation of the law. He said that under the construction upon Section 1,781 Dietrich had enjoyed the lease, but a short time after he had become a United States Senator, that is after taking the oath. He said that although he had received rentals from April 24 to December 2, under the Court's construction of the section there had been no violation of the law. The property was deeded to Senator Dietrich's daughter shortly after December 2, 1901. "I would not," said the district attorney, "ask a jury to return a verdict of guilty against a man under any circumstances unless I believe such a verdict to be in the interest of justice."

The Court, therefore, on motion of the district attorney, entered a nolle to the indictment, which cleared the docket of the cases against Dietrich and Fisher.

In his opinion Judge Vandeventer said: "The two houses of Congress, under the Constitution, are the only judges of who shall sit as members of their respective bodies. The district attorney has admitted that there was no session of Congress from 28, the date of the election by the Legislature, of Dietrich, and December 2, the date of the convening of Congress. Until the latter date there could be no question raised as to his actual membership in the Senate, nor could he qualify before that body until that time. Until then it was not known whether he would be permitted to enter upon his duties as a United States Senator and as the representative of the people of Nebraska before that body."

The opinion then defines the meaning of members-elect, ex-members and members of Congress and closes:

"Our opinion, therefore, is that this defendant was not a United States Senator at the time of the acts charged in this indictment, within the inhibition of this statute. The jury is instructed to find a verdict of not guilty."

Immediately after the verdict was ordered for defendant, District Attorney Summers announced that he wished to enter a nolle in the case of Jacob Fisher, postmaster at Hastings, explaining his motion by saying:

"If Charles H. Dietrich was not a member of Congress until after December 2, 1901, and the Court held that he was not, then, Jacob Fisher cannot be put upon trial for or on account of agreeing to pay or paying certain sums of money to him or performing contracts for him during the months from July to October, 1901, under a contract made with him as a member of Congress, whereby Jacob Fisher was to be appointed postmaster."

The Court made the order.

## TO FIGHT THE BOLL WEEVIL.

Congress Makes the Sum of \$250,000 Available.

Washington, Jan. 8.—The House today made available the sum of \$250,000 to be used to meet the emergency caused by the ravages of the cotton boll weevil and other insects and diseases affecting cotton. The measure had the support of both sides and was adopted without division. The sum is diverted from the half million dollars appropriated last year to eradicate the foot and mouth disease among cattle.

Mr. Burleson, of Texas, explained that the bill simply diverted money heretofore appropriated for another purpose, and did not make a new appropriation. He urged the importance of the passage of the bill to the cotton growing sections, giving the history of the boll weevil and what it has done.

Mr. Gillette, of Massachusetts, called attention to another insect—the gypsy moth—which has been brought to New England and which, he said, was equally dangerous and should receive attention with a view to extermination.

Mr. Robinson, of Michigan, said he believed it would be establishing a bad precedent to pass the bill.

Mr. Gillette, of Massachusetts, offered an amendment for an additional appropriation of \$250,000 for the eradication of the Egyptian moth.

The Speaker sustained a point of order against the amendment and the bill was passed without division. It provides that the sum made available may be expended by the Secretary of Agriculture in such manner as he shall deem best, in cooperation with State experiment stations and practical cotton growers, if the Secretary of Agriculture shall deem it advisable, to meet the emergency caused by the ravages of the cotton boll weevil and other insects affecting cotton.

Pension bills to the number of 115 were considered in committee of the whole and passed. The House adjourned until Monday.

Omaha, Neb., Jan. 5.—It is officially stated today that E. H. Harriman will become president of the Union Pacific railroad, to succeed Horace G. Burt, whose resignation was recently announced. A general manager will be named, who will be the active head of the affairs of the road, with headquarters in Omaha. The road will be operated by a method similar to that in vogue on the Southern Pacific railroad. Mr. Harriman's incumbency, it is stated, will be one year, at the end of which period his permanent successor, if any, will be named.

## HAND POWER BUGGY.

New Invention That May Compete With the Automobile.

A motorless auto-buggy, propelled by means of hand-wheels, may soon be a familiar feature of street traffic, if the hopes of J. H. Blackburne of Liberty, DeKalb county, are realized. That they will be realized Mr. Blackburne is confident and the fact that on Saturday he received from the United States patent office letters patent on his invention, have made him very sanguine.

Mr. Blackburne on Monday exhibited the patent to an American reporter, and showed detailed drawings of the invention, which he believes is destined to succeed the automobile as that machine has succeeded the horse-drawn vehicle.

Briefly described, the invention is an ordinary buggy with the exception that the rear axle and wheels revolve together; the axle is ball-bearing. It is connected with a system of gears, for every turn of hand wheel, which rises from the buggy bottom in front of the passenger, revolves the larger rear wheels sixteen times. From this it can easily be figured that as one turn of the power wheel, turning the rear wheel sixteen times, will carry the vehicle something like 177 feet. Thirty revolutions of the power wheel would therefore carry the vehicle a mile. One turn of the wheel every four seconds would mean a speed of thirty miles an hour, and Mr. Blackburne asserts that a child can turn the wheel with ease and secure a great speed as a grown man. In fact, Mr. Blackburne further asserts that a one-fourth model of his invention was required by the patent office before issuing a patent, and that his grandson, twelve years old, operated the miniature vehicle on the streets of Washington, creating a sensation by the speed attained.

Colonel Blackburne states that buggies equipped with the invention can be built and placed on the market to sell for \$100 to \$125 each, and he is confident that it will not be long until the streets of Nashville are crowded with his invention. He states that the model he will have ready in two weeks will be capable of attaining a speed of a mile a minute, and he asserts that as a test he will ride in the machine over any turnpike, preferring those with the steepest grades in order to show the hill-climbing ability of the machine. He states that he can make the trip from Nashville to Lebanon and return in less than two hours, the distance being about twenty miles each way.—Nashville American.

## NEW SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY.